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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [GR](#) [AL](#)

SUBJECT: GOA: WE UNDERSTAND THE CHAMS' COMPLAINTS, BUT. . .

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE TREAT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Chams, ethnic Albanians expelled from Greece after World War II, are preparing to file a legal case in an undecided venue seeking Greek citizenship and/or compensation from the Greek government for the mistreatment they received during their forced expulsion. Little has been done for the Cham cause since a 1994 resolution by the Albanian Parliament recognizing their plight, and it seems the GOA does not want to antagonize Greece and risk its relationship by emphasizing the issue. The prospect of a legal case could bring more attention to the Chams, but it is unclear which court would have jurisdiction on this issue and what, if any, concrete effect a case could have for the Chams. End summary.

History of the Chams

¶2. (SBU) The Chams are ethnic-Albanians who lived in northwestern Greece. Near the end of WW II, between 20,000 and 40,000 Chams were expelled from Greece as "fascist collaborators" and resettled in Albania. They were initially treated well in Albania, and many tried to join the Communist system in order to advance, but the Communist government eventually turned against them and executed several leading members. As a result of this and other mistreatment by the Communist regime, the Chams have maintained a cautious attitude towards the government of Albania. Most of the Cham community today is in the center-right coalition (pro-government) and recent estimates number the Cham population in Albania to be around 400,000.

Decades-long Battle for Restitution. . .

¶3. (SBU) The Chams have fought long for restitution. On October 28, Tahir Muhedini, a Cham leader and President of the Party for Justice and Integration, told Poloff that the Chams, with the cooperation of some unnamed high-level GOA officials, have compiled a case outlining the maltreatment and "genocide" that the Greek government committed against them. Muhedini is now determining where to file the case, and mentioned the ICC as a possibility.

. . . with Only Token Support from GOA

¶4. (SBU) Muhedini said none of the problems facing the Cham community have been solved, and none can be without the help of the GOA. However, according to Muhedini, the GOA has done little to help the Chams' cause other than to pass an official resolution in 1994 recognizing the Chams' plight. GOA officials across the board have told Muhedini that he is correct in his characterization of the Chams' mistreatment by the Greeks, but they also say that the GOA does not want to antagonize Greece. According to Muhedini, the Greeks have declared this a non-issue, saying there is no such thing as a Cham.

¶5. (SBU) In an attempt to draw more attention to their cause, Chams and their descendants in Albania have occasionally organized

protests to demand Greek citizenship and/or compensation for the loss of their property. In 2005, for example, Greek President Karolos Papoulias cut short a visit to Albania and cancelled a meeting with his Albanian counterpart, citing security concerns from Cham protests, provoking a stern reaction from the GOA and media outlets which said the protests posed no security risks.

COMMENT

¶6. (SBU) While the Chams' plight is unfortunate, it seems that the GOA is more concerned with its bilateral relationship with Greece than the Chams' claims. Greece is Albania's second-largest trading partner, and with up to one million Albanians working in Greece, the GOA appears unwilling to damage its relationship with the Greeks by pursuing the Cham issue. However, the fact that the Chams are preparing to file a legal case against the Greek government could draw attention to their cause - and take the initiative out of the hands of the GOA - although it remains to be seen which court would have jurisdiction on this issue and what impact a case would have.

WITHERS